

**Minutes of the Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Aldington Village Hall at 7:30pm.**

**Present:** Councillors; L Harman (Chairman), R Boulding, L Guy, P Hannabuss, H Stebbings, G Taylor, S Wagstaff and J Weatherall.

**In attendance:** Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk

Also present 12 members of the public and P New (Neighbourhood Watch)

**1293. Apologies for absence:**

Councillor R Spicer.

**1294. Declarations of interest:**

Cllr P Hannabuss in Minute 1307 Rights to manage open spaces as Chairman of Wheatfields Residents Association.

**1295. Public participation:**

A statement was read out by a resident:

*“The members designate of the Support Group below wish to advise you of the following inaccuracies in the minutes of the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, under the heading 1279-Solar:*

- 1. Acknowledgement of the contents of the proposal document, submitted and circulated to members of the Parish Council.*
- 2. The absence of caveats imposed by the Chair relating to the inclusion of Mersham and the Adequacy submission.*
- 3. That the items under the ‘resolved’ heading do not represent a fair and accurate representation of any discussions which took place amongst members of the council.*
- 4. The clear decision of the members of the Parish Council, concerning the proposal document’s contents and what had been agreed on the night.*

*We ask you to consider all of the above prior to approving the minutes. In such circumstances we offer ourselves up in assisting you to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion”.*

The Chairman responded that the matter would be dealt with at the appropriate time

**1296. Neighbourhood Watch:**

Report attached.

**1297. Ashford Borough Councillor’s Report:**

The Council continues to work towards reducing costs while maintaining services. It is a huge challenge. Fortunately, ABC is fairly robust financially and has reserves for short term support. This morning I was in a forward planning meeting at which officers made the need to make further savings very clear. Political uncertainty at government level is not making fiscal forecasting any easier for local councils but the current administration is determined to focus on delivering the services that residents expect. Work is now beginning on the next iteration of the Corporate Plan for Ashford. These plans are always prepared to overlap the changes of elected

administration in the Council and so we inherited a plan that we now have the opportunity to revise to reflect our priorities for the Council. We are clear that this is maintaining services, building for local people and reducing the long waiting lists for social housing. The number of people in temporary accommodation continues to grow and we cannot build more council homes until Ashford is freed from the nutrient neutrality paralysis on building programmes.

On another topic: A reminder has been issued that Ashford Communities Amenities Grants applications deadline is 29<sup>th</sup> October. I wanted to highlight this as one part of the fund;

### **Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant (Ashford Rural Area)**

Provides a grant of up to £10,000 for an organisation wishing to make improvements to outdoors community facilities such as playing fields or village hall outdoor spaces. We may like to explore this in relation to the creation of an all-weather footpath around Quarry Field.

#### **1298. Solar:**

Councillor Wagstaff reported on the Community Liaison Panel meeting that was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September. It was confirmed that the panels had been removed from fields 26 to 29 and those in field 3 moved further back. The application will not be submitted until confirmation is received from UK Power Networks regarding the connection to Sellindge, the earliest would be November then January 2024.

A Community Meeting on the Stonestreet Green Proposals will be held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall.

Councillor Harman advised that Evolution Power have met with Ashford Borough Council regarding concerns raised by them on some of the proposals.

### **Councillor Hannabuss arrived at the meeting.**

#### **1299. Minutes:**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September were submitted, the Chairman as stated in the public participation session agreed that clarification was needed to minute 1279 in that there was a caveat for not distributing in the whole of Mersham Parish as the funding set aside was for the Parish of Aldington and Bonnington.

A resident interrupted and again questioned the accuracy of the minutes and disagreed with the view of the Chair on the adequacy of consultation in that EPL had not met their obligations.

It was agreed to make clear that the Support Group was endorsed to bring everyone together as one group.

### **Minute 1279 – Solar re-written:**

The EDF application on Church Lane is currently being revised by the applicant following concerns around the environmental reports, a revised application is expected soon.

Evolution Power have completed their 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation and it is expected that the outcomes will be discussed at the Community Liaison Panel Meeting which is scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> September.

A proposal has been received from a resident relating to the subject:

**Goal: the creation of a group from within the Aldington and Mersham community with the necessary resource to enable the Parish Council and the community to jointly speak with ‘one voice’ in the management of the process that will follow the submission of EPL001’s DCO application.**

The proposed identity of the group:

### **THE PARISH COUNCIL SUPPORT GROUP**

Managing the threat of solar development

The objective of the group, according to the ‘mandate’ provided by the unanimous vote at the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 Parish Council meeting:

***To oppose the Stonestreet Green Solar proposal due to its inappropriate location, scale and cumulative impact.***

The process to be managed is defined as follows:

#### **First of all, in relation to the Statutory Consultation Process**

- Comments to be submitted to Ashford BC for consideration as part of their Adequacy of Consultation Representation to the Secretary of State
- Followed by, if considered appropriate, the submission of such comments directly to the Secretary of State

#### **Secondly, in relation to the Preliminary Meeting and Examination**

- The preparation and evaluation of a strategy that will define our case
- The identity and recruitment of specialist resources to support our case
- The research and compilation of subject matter according to the structure and content of the strategy
- The delivery of subject matter to the Examination and the expectation of being cross examined on its content

**Finally** and last but by no means least, the creation and delivery to each home of a communications programme that will inform the community and seek their support.

Councillor Harman having circulated the resident proposal to all Parish Councillors ahead of the meeting, asked whether councillors were in agreement with the proposal that essentially outlined a route to unite all residents who oppose the Stonestreet Green Solar proposal. As Chair, Councillor Harman, suggested that it would be down to the support group to engage with Mersham residents, as the focus of Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council is its own Parish. She also raised concerns about challenging the consultation process undertaken by Evolution Power, being of the opinion that all statutory steps had been followed. There being no

objections or further discussion, the Parish Council agreed to support the proposal for a resident group.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To accept the proposal presented to facilitate the bringing together all parties that wish to respond to the EP application when it is submitted;**
- 2. To engage with other bodies who may have relevant experience i.e. CPRE**
- 3. To facilitate meetings of all of the above**
- 4. To engage specialist support if necessary**
- 5. To advise the community and campaigners of NSIP process so that residents can participate if they so wish**
- 6. To work with all parties to ensure that communications to the wider community is regular and accurate.**

The remaining minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**1300. Chairman's Report:**

Interrupted by a resident leaving the room.

As agreed at the last meeting, we wrote to ask Aldington Primary School to distribute a letter to parents requesting more considerate parking. A few days ago, I observed that the majority of parents were observing the request but approached one individual who had parked on the grass verge at the junction of Roman Road and Goldwell. Given that a polite request does not seem to elicit the behaviour change we would like, I would like to propose to the Parish Council that we investigate the installation of wooden bollards in the left-hand verge at the corner to prevent parking there. Wooden bollards of the sort we have in Ragstone Hollow would do the trick perfectly.

Margaret Gibbs, formerly of the Gardeners Society, has confirmed that she loves the idea of planting an avenue of flowering cherry. She also confirmed that Gardeners Society would be happy to have acknowledgement in the form of a memorial bench that would then share the dedication of this avenue in memory of Paul O'Grady. It was agreed that Margaret would look into what sort of trees would be ideal and find out what it would cost to buy them. Discussion suggested to have an actual flowering avenue, the parish council should consider relocating the beacon.

I would like to talk about Ashford's Call for Sites. This includes a call for landowners to put forward land for nature protects. I met with Led by the Wild this month and agreed funding for generation of a much more nature-friendly area around and behind Quarry Pond, and regeneration of the pond and Quarry Wood. This project makes this area of parish council land potentially eligible for inclusion in the Ashford Local Plan as areas of Biodiversity Net Gain, as I'm sure the work will increase biodiversity tremendously. Given that this is work we plan to do anyway, I would like to suggest to the Parish Council that we request the clerk to put in an expression of interest and an outline of the land so that we can maybe be included as an area for BNG in the plan and maybe benefit from developers purchasing BNG credits. This is

a scheme that is still being developed by government, and though the detail of how it will work is yet to be published – it could be a fantastic opportunity for landowners to generate income from land whilst also improving the local environment. In the case of the land on Quarry Field, this would mean that instead of close mown grass, we will have meadow grass and wild flowers with a mown pathway through it. The first step is to sow Rattle Seed, which inhibits grass growth. I'm told that will be done this week and is a simple job in which we do not need to get involved. In the Spring, wildflower plugs will be planted and we will be putting out a call for volunteers to help with this.

**1301. Finance:**

Feedback from the recent film night has shown that potential revenue was lost by the inability to take card payments. The matter has been researched and it has been ascertained that this can be arranged under contract through a third party company recommended by the Parish Council's bankers, however they charge a monthly fee in the region of £18.00, in addition they charge a percentage of the payment. It has been ascertained that Verifone offer a contract free service at a one off £79.99 and take a percentage of the card payment amount.

Schedule of payments:

Payee	Purpose	Amount
JRB Enterprise	Dog waste bags	£485.40
Filmbank Media	Film night	£269.40
L Stebbings	Fete	£40.00
C Stebbings	Film night	£19.99
Harmer & Sons	Grounds maintenance	£990.00
Harmer & Sons	Remove broken Gym	£942.00
Aldington Village Hall	Room hire	£179.83
Ace power clean	MUGA clean	£4,650.00
Staff costs		£2,316.36
Transfer from Nat west to	Unity bank	£37,000.00

**Resolved:**

- 1. To receive and authorise the payment of the items of expenditure**
- 2. To authorise the transfer of £20,000.00 from NatWest deposit account to NatWest current account**
- 3. To authorise the transfer of £7,000.00 from Unity Trust deposit account to Unity Trust current account**
- 4. To authorise the Parish Clerk to make the necessary arrangement with Verifone subject to the confirmation of points raised at the meeting.**

**1302. Completion of Audit for the year ended 31 March 2023:**

The Parish Council's External Auditor, Mazars LLP, have completed their audit and issued their certificate of discharge of responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The External auditor's opinion being "*On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with proper practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.*"

**1303. Fordred Charity:**

The core purpose of the charity is to distribute the funds earned each year from a parcel of land owned on Romney Marsh. This land is owned in perpetuity and cannot be sold. Thus, it is the bounden duty of the Trustees to ensure that the annual distribution best benefits the 7 parishes named in the original bequest.

The Parish Council is asked to nominate a member to attend the Annual Meeting of the Charity which is to be held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 6pm.

**Resolved: Councillor H Stebbings to attend the meeting of the Fordred Charity.**

**1304. Planning Committee:**

Councillor Wagstaff reported that one application had been considered for The Old Pub on Frith Road to which no objection was raised.

**1305. Neighbourhood Plan:**

Work is currently underway on the amendments to the plan as a result of the public consultation. One area that has been noted is the use of ragstone as a built characteristic which has given the potential for an additional conservation area in the Parish, which will be followed up outside of the plan.

It is anticipated that the Plan will be ready to go to the Regulation 16 Consultation in the next few weeks.

**1306. Events Committee:**

Plans are at an advanced stage for an Advent family fun day on 3<sup>rd</sup> December with stalls and Father Christmas, this is being organised together with the WI and the Village Hall Committee with the proceeds going to the Village Hall. To fund the event a bingo evening is being held on 4<sup>th</sup> November in the Village Hall.

The Hub have extended their hours on 13<sup>th</sup> December as they will be having a Christmas lunch. The team will be taking a break over the festive period so there will be no hub on 27<sup>th</sup> December or 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

**Councillor Stebbings left the meeting.**

**1307. Rights to manage open spaces:**

Presented by Councillor Hannabuss:

There have been several new developments created in the parish of Aldington and Bonnington. Examples being, but not limited, to Wheatfields and Aldington Meadows. These new developments are run by a management company, for example FirstPort.

A management company is typically put in place to manage the day to day running on the development. This can include paying for and organising subcontractors, dealing with resident issues and concern and fixing repairs.

So what is a management company and what do they do?

On the whole management companies are not that bad, they are run for profit, this is therefore their primary objective. They do charge the residents for their service, and they control the subcontractors who are used on site, the works they carry out and manage the repairs which are required on site. They manage all this from the budget for the development and should account for every penny the residents put in and where that money is spent. However, for those who live in a managed area, they will have first hand experience where some decisions made by the management companies are simply unbelievable. With the current cost of living issues that we all face, management companies still seem to justify annual price increases, while also providing an unsatisfactory service. Leaving residents feel powerless to do anything about it.

Our Experience:

Focus on what I have witness while living in Wheatfields, we've had a lack of service. Repairs have either not been carried out at all or any that have been attempted have been a waste of money. We are never receiving any communications from FP with no explanation for lack of works or where our money is going. Unnecessary work was quoted, which if it had of happened would have cost the residents of Wheatfields a total of £15,000. We have also witnessed double payments to contractors, and clear miss-management of our accounts.

There are some actions that residents can take to try to take back some control:-

Residents living within a development, flat or apartment style building have the right to establish a resident association. The resident association is run by a group of volunteers who work on behalf of all residents to engage with the management company. Importantly this gives the residents more legal rights and power over the management company. The Resident association must be approved and accepted by the "landowner" this may be the developer, estate management company or even the council in some situations. A resident association is a good starting point as they will engage more with the management company and have more rights to see the financial records of the estate.

The in addition to the resident association, there is also a legal right called, "Rights to Manage". This is where the residents choose to remove the management company all together and take over the management themselves. Firstly, I would like to explain, that this does not mean residents carry out the work instead, there is no rota of works where someone will cut the grass this week and another the next time. It simply means your chosen representatives replace the existing management company and manage the subcontractors to complete the works. To do this, residents have to setup a limited company by guarantee, or a residents management company which in short is a non-profit organisation which provides a service but different to a charity.

If things still do not improve then you also have the ability to raise your issues with the property ombudsman, who can order the management company to carry out actions or possibly issues fines to the management company.

So, what is the future and how does this help the community?

Probably the most important is that with a residents' management company, there will be Reduced fees, as a non-profit organisation, the new rights to manage company will not be charging residents management fees. In the case of Wheatfields this would save the residents about £3000 a year.

It would yield an improved service as the resident's care more about their area than a management company who does not live in the area. It should provide more communication and works should be carried out quicker and the management company would be more accountable.

Working with the parish council and representatives from each development, the vision is to create a management company for the whole parish. The new company could possibly be identified in the neighbourhood community plan so that any future developments are required to use this new company. As a parish we can then tender for the works on a larger scale to reduce costs, improve service and work together as a larger community. The power of the parish council working closer with the new developments to improve the community and services that are provided.

Before any decisions will be made on progressing this a report on the current state of each development will be prepared.

**1308. Items for information:**

Councillor Boulding reported that the Village Hall had recently held their AGM and that 4 new volunteers had come forward to boost the committee. It was also reported that Chris Fowler was standing down with effect from the 15<sup>th</sup> November.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:30pm.



## **ALDINGTON & BONNINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**OCTOBER 2023.**

**As the Autumn approaches I will need to risk assess the trend of crimes that we will be facing in the Aldington and Bonnington area as we head into the darker evenings and criminals adjust their approach to targeting areas.**

**As the first signs of Christmas appear in our shops the time is right to start considering the crime advice to issue.**

**I feel there is no need to stress the areas of crime that we are continually vulnerable to, but this month focus on two areas where I feel the residents need to be alert and vigilant. That advice will be increased as we head into Xmas and both the risk with these crimes will increase in the run to Christmas. Criminals will ramp up their efforts we must match that.**

### **THEFT FROM VEHICLES**

**These are mostly avoidable and preventable crimes. With a few seconds of checking when a vehicle is parked a resident can avoid being a victim of crime.**

**Please park as safe as you can. Lock the vehicle and then just stand and look into the vehicle for just a few seconds! Can you see anything? If you can, so can a criminal and you could become a victim of crime.**

**Leave absolutely nothing whatsoever on show in a vehicle when parking especially last park up for the night.**

**Typical items stolen. Wallets, purses, handbags, sunglasses, small change carried in the cupholders, laptops and briefcases.**

**Remember the loss of a work laptop and or a briefcase/document case may see the victim of the crime also lose their job!!**

**We must prevent these types of crime.**

**Criminals will return to an area where they have success and the message here to communities must be blunt and frank and needs to be.**

**If criminals think that residents are careless, forgetful, or even lazy about items left in vehicles they are going to come back.**

**If we do not win the hearts and minds of our residents this will always be a risk.**

**Vans with tools, equipment and goods left inside overnight are a risk. Of course, it is not practical to unload vehicles each night, so we must ensure those vehicles are parked and as secure as possible. Parking a van with rear opening doors tight up against something means the doors cannot be opened even if forced.**

**During the hours of darkness criminals walk the streets just trying car door handles. Every so often bingo! a door is left unlocked, and the criminal just sits in the vehicle and check glovebox and for any items in the car. They leave the vehicle with whatever they can find.**

**If a vehicle is locked and they can see a more attractive item to steal they will break the window and grab what they can.**

**If you sadly have to visit to a crematorium look at the sign in the car park.**

#### **CAR THIEVES OPERATE IN THIS CAR PARK**

**Why? Well, it is very simple. We attend funerals, we are not at our best and we all dread our mobile phone going off in the service. We have checked it is on silent or switched off 10 times, but we are still worried, so we leave it in the car. Criminals know this. People leave coats and bags that they do not want to take into the service, criminals know this.**

#### **CARS IN LONG TERM CAR PARKS/SHOPPING CENTRES/RAILWAY STATIONS**

**Criminals know these vehicles are unattended for a time, they will be looking!!**

#### **DRIVING TO REMOTE WOODLANDS AREAS**

**We drive to woodland car parks and go for nice walks. We don't want to carry handbags etc around the woods. We leave them in the car, criminals know this!**

**Please don't tell me don't worry I tuck in under the seat or lock it in the boot that is where the criminals will look first and because they know the vehicle is unattended for a time, they will use a hammer to enter the car!!**

**THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR, LEAVE NOTHING ON SHOW IN A CAR AND IF THE CAR IS GOING TO BE UNATTENDED FOR A LONGER PERIOD THINK WHAT YOU NEED TO HAVE IN THE VEHICLE.**

**THINK LIKE A CRIMINAL PLEASE!**

**If you see persons trying car doors call 999 immediately this is a "CRIME IN PROGRESS.**



**The above can be avoided. THINK SAFE & SECURE PLEASE!  
THEFT OF INTERNET SHOPPING DELIVERIES FROM DOORSTEPS**

**This crime trend is constantly rising and naturally as we head towards the run into Christmas will increase further.**

**The two parts to the risks are.**

**Firstly a passing “chancer and opportunist” just by chance seeing the parcel on a doorstep and taking the opportunity to pick it up.**

**Secondly and now more worrying the delivery vans are followed which means rural and outlying properties now become a risk.**

**I shall be continuing to give out advice and crime prevention. Please try to make safe delivery arrangements to avoid being a victim of crime.**

CRIME

## **Parcel thefts rise from doorsteps as gangs follow courier vans**



**Remember last Christmas in Ashford, criminals who had become frustrated at following a van to pick up parcels suddenly just highjacked the vehicle and drove it off when the driver was engaged at a front door.**



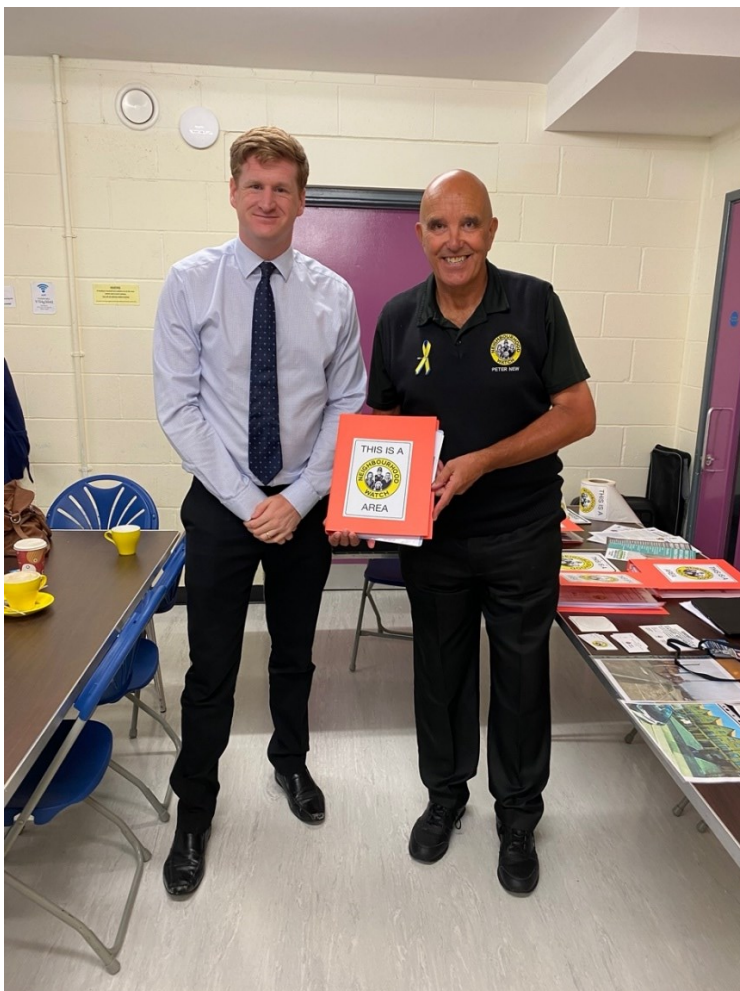
**I have had the opportunity to engage with the Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott recently on a visit to Ashford and update him on the work that I am undertaking especially engaging and working with local Community and Parish Councils.**

**Other areas covered were Operation Guardian Angel supporting the elderly, disabled and vulnerable in our society. Operation Everest which tries to alert and protect the Nepalese members of our communities who are often especially targeted by criminals plus a whole range of topics.**

**As reported to council my work will continue on new build developments part of my new build project work in Ashford which is Operation Horizon.**

**That work which is not only about keeping new residents' crime free and free from the fear of being a victim of crime but also my work helps to build communities and community cohesion.**

**That is especially important where new residents have come from much farther afield than the local Kent areas.**





**Peter New**

Top contributor 3 d ·



Dear Readers

A standard agenda item at virtually ever council I work with is parking and drop offs/pickups at start and end of school.

For some reason around about 250yards from school all parking logic and kindness to each other vanishes.

The Highway Code is forgotten, people block driveways and generally there is an arrogance with some parents whose little "cherub" has to be picked up right outside school gates.

Another problem is why when people live 12 minutes from the school by car why do the leave 6 minutes to get there!

Your parish council are very concerned and worried about the parking issues and speed through the village.

Sadly as I said it is everywhere however the Ashford Community Safety unit has made a start and I hope I can get the to Aldington soon

Please try to park sensibly and above all considerately

Thank you for your help in this matter

Peter

Peyer New (peternew1@aol.com)

Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch.

**I put out a community post following our discussions at the last meeting.**

**You will also see as I sadly reported that the problem around schools is across the whole District and colleagues have started to make patrols to deal with this problem**



## School Parking

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Good afternoon Resident

We have had many reports of poor and inconsiderate parking outside of multiple schools across the Ashford district at both morning drop off and afternoon pick up times. This is a reminder to please consider where you park at school times -

- Do not park on double yellow lines
- Do not park on zig-zag lines
- Do not obstruct the school entrance and exit
- Do not block driveways or paths

This is for the safety of everyone in attendance at the school and for those residents living around the schools.

Both the Police and Civil enforcement officers from Ashford Borough Council will be attending schools in the Ashford district to monitor the parking situations and a zero tolerance approach will be taken should any offences be identified.

Officers from the Ashford Community Safety Unit have today attended John Wesley School, Great Chart accompanied by A Civil Enforcement Officer from Ashford Borough Council, where a number of motorists were spoken to and words of advice given. We will be back.

Do you have any issues of parking outside of schools. Can we make the school drop off or pick up safer?

Kind regards,

Ashford CSU.

If the council intends to write and engage with the local school there may be elements of the above you wish to consider in your letter which hopefully the school would circulate to all parents.

I am very pleased to finish my report to you as a council, that has supported me for several years now, that on Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of September I was invited to London for a National Awards event by the National Neighbourhood Watch committee.

My work on new build developments and community reach won the award from over 300 entries nationally and I was accompanied by my wife Susie to the very prestigious event.

Awards are a signal that the work is heading in the right direction however they are only as good as yesterday and the need to immediately focus on the future cannot be overstated.

My acceptance speech covered many of the areas that we are working together on. For me partnerships with councillors and the dedicated councillors is essential as we move forward in keeping communities and the resident as safe and secure as possible.

I shall continue to lobby for streets to be built for 2040 not 1960. For better lighting and for garage doors not car ports as they are becoming like shops with no tills and a criminal's paradise in areas where the bricks and cement are still wet!!







**I would add this work is not rocket science it is the continued focus on the basic principle of keeping people crime free and free from the fear of being a victim of crime.**

**Essential to that is good solid communication with residents across a range of platforms and systems especially ensuring we never ever leave behind the person living on their own maybe older and vulnerable who may only have a landline for communication.**

**Yes of course it was a proud moment for my award, but it was only a moment in time reflecting the past and I already was dealing with crimes and crime prevention as the fast train from London brought me home.**

**We are only as good as yesterday. Our work will never ever be done of finished. Criminals will continue to strike as they traditionally have in the way they have especially in our rural areas however alongside those crimes is a very modern technical crime by very intelligent and resourceful of the criminal work.**

**We have only 2 council meetings before we enter 2024 but our commitment to work together must be front and centre of our planning and thinking.**

**Hopefully the Kent Police model will be further strengthened in Ashford by more officers by then.**

**As always, I place on record my very sincere and grateful thanks for all your work and continued support.**

**Peter**

**Peter New**

**Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch**